2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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621 move for religious feasts and family celebrations. Sometimes a
794 number of these farms are clustered around a chapel or small
795 church dependent upon the parish church. In time, these hamlets may disappear; historical sources cite many which have long since vanished.[1] On the other hand, a hamlet may grow to the point where its inhabitants can afford to build a larger church and in other ways successfully press their claim to become a separate
632 parish. Most rural parishes in Malta and Gozo have come into
794 being in this way. Some towns have been divided into two or
795 more parishes for administrative reasons. In Malta, Qormi and Valletta are each divided into two parishes, and Sliema into three.
[578] Rabat in Gozo is currently being divided into two parishes. But because of fierce rivalry between the residents of the territories concerned, the exact boundary line is disputed and the territorial division will probably take another generation to complete.

79 The parish priest, who in all but the smallest parishes is assisted by a curate or more, is responsible to the Church for the care of
[609] the souls of all Catholics resident in his parish. Except where foreign service personnel live with their families – notably in Rabat, Naxxar, Mosta, St. Paul's Bay, Luqa and Birżebbuġa – all villagers are Catholic, and are thus the priest's parishioners. These parishioners also form part of the corporate body of the Church.

793 The clergy in Malta, as in all other Catholic countries, are divided into two main groups: the secular or diocesan clergy, and the regular clergy. Diocesan priests are trained in the Bishop's Seminary and are directly subject to the authority of the Bishop. A further distinction is made between those diocesan priests whose families or patrons have been able to provide them with a benefice – either property or cash deposited at the Curia bank – yielding a minimum of £10 annually, and those who have received their benefices from their Bishop. After the first five years the former, who are by far the most numerous, are free to serve where they wish. The latter always remain at the service of their Bishop. Most parishes are run by diocesan priests, and the clergy
[792] resident in the villages belong to this group. The friars and monks of the regular clergy are members of religious orders. They have been trained in the seminaries and houses of their particular orders.

[1] An interesting study of villages which have disappeared is given in M. Richardson, *Aspects of the Demography of Modern Malta* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Durham, 1960), pp. 243 ff.

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They must live together in specially designated premises under the discipline of their order, and they are subject to the authority of their provincial or superior. As we shall see, the position that the clergy occupy in society and the nature of their work is to a very considerable extent determined by their sheer numbers. In 1957 there were 1,229 diocesan priests, friars and monks and 1,588 nuns in Malta and Gozo.[1] In addition to these, in 1958 there were approximately 220 friars and monks and 200 nuns studying abroad or working as missionaries or chaplains to communities of migrants.[2]

There are a number of associations which occupy important positions in the structure of both the diocese and its constituent parishes. At the diocesan level the most important of these are the College of Archpriests and Parish Priests, which acts as a pressure group in the interest of its members; the Cana Movement, which runs courses for engaged couples, a marriage advisory council and a clinic; and the Social Action Movement, which is trying to establish trade unions. There is also the Diocesan Junta, or Diocesan Council of Catholic Lay Organizations. This body, on which most of the diocesan and parochial societies are represented, is an important pressure group. As already noted, it played a leading part in bringing about the defeat of the Malta Labour Party in the 1962 elections.

Many associations, though organized at the diocesan level, have semi-autonomous branches at the parish level. These can be roughly divided into the lay apostolate associations and the devotional societies. The lay apostolate groups have been organized so that 'the Church will be able to exercise its direct and indirect action in all the fields: religious, cultural, technical, family, workers' movements and others.'[3] These societies are usually divided by age and sex, and except for the Society of Christian Doctrine, all are run by village priests who are responsible to the parish priest. These chaplains and the lay leaders generally work out an active programme of lectures, good works and outings. Many of them take part in religious processions and, in general, support the work of the parish priest. Together with the clergy,

[1] *1957 Census of the Maltese Islands: Report on Economic Activities* (Valletta, Central Office of Statistics, 1958), p. 45.
[2] Charles G. Vella, ed., *The Catholic Directory of Malta and Gozo* (Valletta, Archbishop's Palace, 1958), pp. 273–308.
[3] François H. Houtart, in Vella, p. 311.

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quarrels and village disputes, for their position in society makes them important allies. These demands frequently place them in the difficult position of having to choose between acting as an impartial servant of God and acting as a good son and loyal friend, who can only be impartial at the cost of making enemies of friends and family.

While parish priests, in all save the smallest parishes, usually receive an income sufficient for a reasonably comfortable life, few ordinary diocesan priests can live on their income as clerics. The average village priest gets only his daily Mass stipend of five shillings as compensation for his clerical services. If a priest is popular and gifted, he may be able to earn a bit extra by preaching, lecturing and taking part in religious functions in other parishes. Even so, most priests are forced to look to secular fields to be able to help support their parents and near relatives. Thus it is that most of the village clergy are part-time priests. That is, they spend most of the day away from their parish working at jobs that vary from farming to school teaching. Their pastoral work in their own parish is limited.

Of the eight priests born in Kortin and still living there, two are retired, one is the parish curate, two work outside the village as teachers and three are clerks with various diocesan bodies. In the evening most help the parish priest in church, teach catechism to the children and take charge of the various lay associations for which the parish priest has asked them to be responsible. In Farrug there is only one local priest in the village. He teaches in the village's elementary school, and assists the parish priest in the evening, on Sundays and on feast days.

In almost every village there is an infants' school run by one of the female religious orders. The nuns are supported by donations of cash and produce from the local inhabitants. A few nuns earn something by doing elementary nursing among the sick of the community.

There are a number of other officers connected with the parish. These include the procurators (administrators) of the smaller churches and chapels, the sacristan, the choirmaster, the organist, the prefect of the altar boys, and so on. All have certain responsibilities delegated to them by the parish priest. In those villages where the celebration of the annual festa is organized by a committee, its members have the authority to command the financial and manpower resources of the community while they prepare

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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It is also the custom in Malta to commemorate all Souls' day by distributing relief among the poor and needy. Collections are made for the purpose of purchasing bread and providing dinner for the poor in the lower quarters of the towns and populous centres. 796 769 1735

A walk at about 11 a.m., on the 2nd of November, as far as the square in front of the Capuchins' Convent at Vittoriosa or at Floriana, or to some other place where the relief is distributed, affords not a little delight. [792]

About a hundred poor old men and women, some of whom either half crippled or blind are to be seen struggling towards the big boiler in which the dinner is being cooked, with something in the shape of a pot in their hands, each and every one eager to get his or her share of the nicely cooked dinner.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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[735] When these poor creatures get their share, they go gladly back to some corner to eat what has been procured for them by the contributions received from the charitably disposed.

Before leaving the description of the celebration of All Souls' Day, it would be interesting also to mention another custom which prevails in the Island on the 2nd of November.

On this day most of the charnel-houses are thrown open and lighted up with scores of oil lamps and decked out with flowers, while crowds throng the vaults to visit the bones of their friends and relatives.

[792] The most crowded of these vaults, however, used to be that below the Capuchin church and Convent at Flo-

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
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riana. (*). Here the fleshless skeletons of the monks who died in the convent are dressed up in the robes which they wore during life, and arranged erect in niches along the wall. 796 769 [792]

St. Odilo, abbot of Cluny, in 998 instituted the "Commemoration of all the faithful departed" in all the monasteries of his Congregation, on the 1st of November, which was soon adopted by the whole western Church. The Council of Oxford in 1222, declared it a holiday of the second class, on which certain necessary and important kinds of work were allowed (†). In Malta however the 2nd of November is only a day of devotion. 175 796 769

(*) The opening of this vault for the public on All Soul's day has been stopped for some years past to prevent some accidents through overcrowding. Visitors, however, are allowed in at any time of the year by applying for permission to the Father Superior.

(†) BUTLER, "Life of Saints."